

## Once Upon a Time (2012)

Text and composition by Hildegard Westerkamp

Narrators: Leora Amber Ruebsaat and Sibling  
Girl's Voice: Sonja Ruebsaat

One day in the Fall of 2011 I wrote a fairy tale entitled "The Girl, the Witch, and the Magic Bird". Ultimately it is about the power of the voice, the poisonous influence of the Muzak Corporation (among others) and the magic of listening and music making.

It seemed obvious that my two grandchildren (10 and 7 at the time) should be the readers of this story. To my great delight they took up the challenge and surprised me with their hard work, endurance, and their lovely ways of speaking and reading. To read such a long story at their age and have it recorded by a very picky 'Oma' who wants to have every word and syllable annunciated as clearly as possible, is not an easy task. I was delighted by the creative energies that emerged in all of us during the process and the end result was a series of good recordings from which to choose for this piece.

The girl's voice is that of my daughter, the mother of the two children, recorded when she was a little girl. Her voice is featured in an earlier piece of mine entitled *Moments of Laughter* (1988) and reappears here.

The recording of the loon was made by members of the World Soundscape Project at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada, in the early 1970s and is used here by permission.

*Once Upon a Time* was commissioned by the Western Front in Vancouver for a whole-night event in January 2012, entitled *Circle of Sleep*, the concept of which was conceived by music curator DB Boyko. On the night of the premiere event, the audience reclined comfortably on floor mats with blankets and pillows listening to this bedtime story, perhaps dozing off, relaxed and calmed by the end of it, ready to hear and dream of more sounds to come throughout the night.